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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DCM REAFFIRMS U.S.-PHILIPPINE TIES AT ANNIVERSARY OF WWII
LEYTE GULF LANDING

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. During an October 20 visit to the provincial capital city of Tacloban, Leyte Province, in the Eastern Visayas, the Deputy Chief of Mission recognized past U.S.-Philippine partnerships and sacrifices as the foundation for present cooperation and projects. The DCM and Naval Attache led the U.S. delegation to the annual commemorative program which this year marked the 64th Anniversary of the World War II Leyte Gulf Landings that led to the Philippines' liberation. During the program, the DCM stressed the importance of remembering this significant historical moment and offered a message of peace for the future. Local officials and diplomatic representatives, as well as two local Peace Corps Volunteers, participated in the commemorative program and luncheon. The DCM also visited the regional Coca-Cola bottling plant, a model of solid American business principles and corporate social responsibility. During two live radio interviews and a taped television interview, the DCM further promoted USG development efforts in environment, education, and health. END SUMMARY.

WE NEED TO REMEMBER THE LANDINGS

¶2. (U) Hundreds of local residents filled the areas around the MacArthur Landing Memorial National Park, gathered to commemorate General MacArthur's return to the Philippines and its subsequent liberation. To start the program, the Philippine military raised the flags of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the U.S., while representatives from those countries, alongside local officials, including Leyte Governor Jericho Petilla, laid wreaths at the shrine of General MacArthur. In his remarks, the DCM stressed a message of peace and emphasized the importance of remembering the sacrifices made on October 20, 1944. Guest of Honor Senator Manuel A. Roxas engaged with the crowd, encouraging Filipinos to be inspired by the Leyte Landing heroes, so that Filipinos "...can live lives free from want, hardship, and hunger, and are free to pursue our best destinies in the Philippines."

¶3. (U) A local high school thespian club presented a play about the liberation and the commemorative program concluded with a military parade, meant to recreate the victory parade of the Allied Forces. The parade was dedicated to the decreasing number of living veterans, and their spouses and children, in the hope of rekindling fond memories of the liberation day. According to local politician Carlo Loreto, it was "extremely moving that both U.S. embassy and U.S. military representatives attended the Leyte Landing event because, in recent years, the people of Leyte think others may have forgotten the significance of the day." He and many other Leytenos shared how moved they were by the USG presence.

¶4. (U) The DCM, Naval Attache and U.S. delegation also attended the commemorative luncheon held at the historic CAP Building, General MacArthur's former headquarters. The luncheon, which included a cultural dance program by a local troupe, ended with a tour of the MacArthur museum.

HAVE A COKE AND A SMILE

15. (U) Immediately following the lunch, the DCM visited the Tacloban Coca-Cola Bottling Plant with Coca-Cola Visayas Region Operations Manager and Tacloban Plant Operations Manager. This plant, the oldest in the region, is the first of its kind to adopt a new waste water treatment technology program, combining efficient microbiological treatment with a biologically activated waste water treatment system. The plant has two bottling lines, both operating on two shifts, and is a leading regional producer with daily production of 28,240 cases, and up to 35,300 cases in the November-December peak season. The DCM conveyed the embassy's support of Coca-Cola's corporate social responsibility programs, including Coca-Cola's Little Red Schoolhouse construction program and their donation of bottled water for victims affected by Typhoon Frank in July.

TALKING TO THE EASTERN VISAYAS

16. (U) During the DCM's radio and TV interviews, he connected personally with listeners as he shared his father's experiences of fighting in the Pacific during World War II. He also expressed support for Philippine war veterans and emphasized the positive impact of U.S.-sponsored environmental and humanitarian projects in the region, such as waste water treatment, proper sanitation awareness, composting programs, Peace Corps coastal resource management projects, and U.S. military assistance to mudslide victims in February 2006. The media and Leyte's public were delighted with the U.S. delegation visit and plan to continue their tradition of remembering the past and building close relations with

MANILA 00002425 002 OF 002

the U.S.

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